

# THE SOUL OF CENTRAL AFRICA



JOHN ROSCOE

**THE SOUL OF CENTRAL AFRICA**



**ANKOLE: MEDICINE-MEN READY FOR WORK**

The Soul of Central  
Africa *A General Account of  
The Mackie Ethnological Expedi-  
tion* ❀ By the Rev. John Roscoe,  
Hon. M.A. (Camb.), Leader of the Expedition

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To

**SIR PETER J. MACKIE, BART..**

whose munificence made the Expedition possible;  
these pages are gratefully dedicated.

## PREFACE

**I**N this book I have aimed at giving a general account of the journeyings of the Mackie Ethnological Expedition in Central Africa and of the lives and ways of the peoples visited, leaving such information as is more of a purely scientific character and not so much of popular interest to be published later. Some of the customs of these tribes are, indeed, of such a nature that they cannot well be described in a book which is intended for the general reader. I have, however, mentioned in passing a few of these customs, without entering into details, in order to let people at home know that there still exist, in this age of enlightenment, human beings whose lives are spent in such terrible darkness.

When I ceased to be a missionary in Africa I was several times asked whether it would not be possible for me to return to the country and complete some of the investigations which I began during my twenty-five years of work there. It was thought that as I had been resident in those parts for so many years, and not only knew the country and the peoples, but had also some knowledge of their languages, their characteristics, and their modes of thought, I was more suited for conducting an ethnological expedition than a younger man, who would take months to acquire the preliminary knowledge that would be necessary before he could start the real work of investigation.

For some time, funds for such a purpose were not

available, but Sir James G. Frazer, who first aroused in me an interest in anthropology, was unceasing in his attempts to find some means of financing the work. At length, owing to his efforts, Sir Peter Mackie, of Glen-readell, became interested in the project, and most generously came forward and shouldered the whole financial burden, handing over to the Royal Society ample sums for the purpose. The Royal Society undertook the supervision of the expedition and exerted its great influence to remove obstacles and difficulties in the way of travelling arrangements in Africa, and in many other matters.

When, however, we had found so generous a patron, other difficulties arose, for the war made the expedition impossible, and, when peace came, travelling difficulties were so great that it was June of 1919 before I finally started. That I got a passage even then was due to the interest of Sir Peter Mackie, who made arrangements with the Clan Line of steamers to carry me and my goods to Africa. I wish here to express my thanks to this firm for the assistance which they rendered to the expedition.

During all the preparations and throughout the whole course of the expedition Sir Peter Mackie's interest and kindness never flagged, and he was indefatigable in his endeavours to help me in every possible way. Personally I owe him a great debt of gratitude, and words of thanks are quite inadequate to express the service to Science, to the Government, to Christianity, and, last but not least, to the native of Central Africa, that his generosity made possible. I can but hope that the results of the expedition, incomplete as they are, may make a fitting return for his munificence.

The objects of the expedition were both scientific



*Photograph: Nimmo*

*Peter J. Mackie 1921.*



and philanthropic. In the first place, science requires information with regard to the tribes of Central Africa, whose old habits and customs are fast disappearing under the rising flood of civilization. For the collection of such information the time is now or never, for the only records are in the memories of the people, and a very short time will suffice to sweep them into oblivion. Secondly, it was hoped that the information thus acquired might be of some help to those who rule this part of our Empire and, through them, to the native tribes who inhabit it. The peoples of such a land are so entirely different from us in their habits of life and thought that, in order to secure just and peaceable government, their rulers should know enough of their laws and customs to avoid those flagrant errors and injustices which must of necessity lead to discontent, bitterness, and strife. Such a study may also show what ideas and tendencies already present in the native mind may, with advantage, be strengthened and developed in order to accelerate the growth of these peoples in civilization, so that they may take their place in the forward march of the nations of the world. Then, too, for the missionary a right understanding of primitive beliefs is essential, for he should be able to distinguish between customs which must be ruthlessly destroyed and those which contain a germ of truth capable of development. He must also be able to present the Christian belief in a manner acceptable to the native mind.

I have here and there set down criticisms which my special knowledge of the native and of his language has enabled me to make. These, I hope, may be of some help in calling attention to abuses which may have been overlooked or of which the serious character has not been realized.

## Preface

One important purpose of the expedition remains unfulfilled, for native risings and the unsettled state of the country made it impossible to go through Karamojo to the borders of Abyssinia in order to visit the Galla tribes. This was just the part of the country in which I had hoped to do the most valuable work of the expedition, but it has had to be left for some future time, it may be for some other worker, who, I trust, will be more fortunate and more successful than I was.

Mr. Wellcome, of the well-known firm of Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome & Company, very generously provided me with a medicine-chest and the drugs necessary for the expedition. These were invaluable, and saved the lives of my boys on more than one occasion, besides enabling me to gain an influence among some of the peoples by my ability to supply remedies for diseases from which they were suffering. My sincere thanks are due to Mr. Wellcome for this, and also for a donation to enable me to collect objects of pharmaceutical interest for investigation and exhibition purposes.

I desire here to record my grateful thanks to the Rev. W. A. Cox for his kind help in reading over the MS. and making suggestions; to my assistant, Miss Bisset, for unceasing work which has relieved me of much of the burden of producing this book; to Sir James G. Frazer, who has kindly read the proofs; and, finally, to Mr. Filleul, of the Uganda Protectorate, and one or two others, who have supplied me with some of the photographs.

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